

C O N F I D E N T I A L

HEADQUARTERS CC"R"
14TH ARMORED DIVISION, A. P. O. 446
U S ARMY

31 January 1945

HISTORY CC"R", 14TH ARMORED DIVISION, MONTH OF JANUARY, 1945.

Activities of the combat command up to and including the 2d January 1945 were included in the December, 1944, history inasmuch as that was the last date of an important operation conducted in the Vosges mountains by Hq CC"R", then designated Task Force Hudelson under VI Corps control. The January history will, therefore, commence 3d January 1945, at which time CC"R" proceeded to Bouxwiller (8125), again under command of the 14th Armored Division. The units attached by Division order were the 117 Cav (-), and A Co, 19th AIB.

For the ensuing 7 day period Hq CC"R" and attached units remained in bivouac in the Bouxwiller area, with the attached units undergoing reorganization and refitting. The commander and staff were active during this period in the assertion of vehicular, equipment, and personnel losses with the necessary action being taken for replacement.

For the first 3 or 4 days of the above mentioned period individuals and small units continued to find their way back to their parent organizations after having been cut off by the enemy action in the preceeding operation. These people were refitted, given medical aid (some suffered serious cases of exposure) and as much rest as possible.

It must be said that the enemy attempts to retake Alsace were still continuing and enemy activity became more pronounced throughout the Corps front. With these facts in mind the staff of CC"R", in accordance with division plans, made continuous study of terrain and road nets for possible employment anywhere on the Corps front.

The 14th Armored Division marched to vicinity of Morsbronn les Bains 11 January, 1945, with the mission of restoring the VI Corps MLR, it having been penetrated by the enemy in the vicinity of Hatten. For the march, Hq CC"R" had under its control 47th Tk Bn (-), 19th AIB, 94th Cav Rcn Sqd (-), 125th E (-). (For assembly area see attached journal). The remainder of 19th AIB had rejoined CC"R" the afternoon of 11 January 1945, having been attached to the 45th Div.

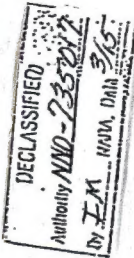
Attacks on 11 January 1945 by CC"A" and CC"B", 14th Armored Division, had failed to restore the MLR in the vicinity of Hatten, and on the night of 12 January 1945, the commanding general ordered the commitment of CC"R" (See Operations instructions #10).

CC"R" was ordered to assemble in the vicinity of Niederbetschdorf prior to daylight 13 January 1945; attack at daylight to seize Hatten; reestablish VI Corps MLR; hold MLR until relieved by 79th Div; after relief by 79th Div to regroup and prepare to march to an assembly area or continue attack to the South and East. In addition to protect the right (south) flank of 14th Armored Division; maintain contact with CC"A", 14th Armored Division, and coordinate fires with CC"B", 14th Armored Division.

Under command of CC"R" for the attack were the following units: 47th Tk Bn (-), 19th AIB, A-125 Eng, 2nd Bn 315 Inf, the latter unit being already in the town of Hatten, having been cut off by the enemy at the time the MLR was penetrated.

At 0800A a coordinated attack of Infantry and Tanks was launched astride the RR to a point south of Hatten (180336) and then north into the southeast portion of town. The attack jumped off at the designated time and the units advanced with little opposition to the approaches of the town. But after

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crossing the railroad and turning north to the town, the 19th AIB came under intense heavy and medium calibre observed artillery fire concentrations. The battalion commander, after having made several attempts at reorganization at this forward position, was compelled to withdraw his troops before another attack could be launched. Three tanks of the platoon attached to the infantry battalion had been knocked out near the entrance to Hatten, but the remainder of the tank battalion had advanced to the south of town and were in the supporting position shelling the town, having undergone no losses.

It was evident that an entrance to the town of Hatten could not be made from the southwest of town. The CO of CC"R" at 1600A ordered an attack from the west and by 1700A all infantry units had entered the town, some riding on the tanks, and others entering dismounted.

After occupation of the western third of the town, the tanks were ordered back in order to resupply and plan for the continuation of the attack while the two battalions of infantry, then in the town, consolidated their positions and prepared to hold for the night. Plans were made for the clearing of Hatten the following day at daylight; the 19th AIB and 2-315 Inf with 1 platoon of tanks attached were to advance to the east and clear Hatten. The 47th Tk Bn (-) made plans to support the attack by fire.

A strong enemy counterattack came before our attack could be launched. Throughout most of the day the enemy made efforts to throw us out of Hatten, and it was night fall before the situation could be called well in hand.

The enemy attack had netted some ground and a few houses. Our much delayed attack was ordered to jump off as soon as possible and after considerable reorganization the attack got underway just after dark. This attack met with fairly good success and by midnight about half of the town was reported by front line units to be in our hands. Units were ordered to dig in and hold their positions.

In the early hours of the following morning another strong enemy counter-attack came, in which very bitter fighting took place. The enemy attack was supported by flame-throwing tanks and an unknown amount of infantry. Identifications indicated enemy strength initially as three to four battalions; however, relief and shift of enemy troops quite obviously went on continuously. This enemy attack forced our infantry units back to their original positions -- positions occupied by the 2-315 Inf at the beginning of the attack.

In each of the above mentioned enemy counterattacks the 47th Tk Bn (-) was committed and assaulted the southeast part of town in an effort to relieve enemy pressure on our hard-pressed infantry in the town. Each time, this succeeded in breaking up the enemy counterthrusts, but invariably cost us a considerable number of tanks. Our tank strength was increasingly diminished in an effort to hold the town.

Thus, on the 16th January, 1945, several coordinated attacks had been launched in attempts to seize Hatten. None succeeded. It was decided to make one more coordinated attack on the 17th, but strong, continuous enemy pressure made future attacks impossible. Orders were received from higher headquarters to take up the defensive.

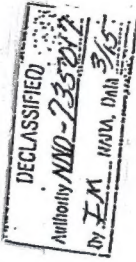
From the 17 January 1945 to 20 January 1945 our troops continued on the defensive. Enemy counterattacks continued relentlessly, but were all contained. On the evening of the 20th, orders for the Corps withdrawal were received. The 47th Tk Bn covered the withdrawal of infantry units which began retrograde movement at approximately 2000A. An orderly withdrawal was accomplished without casualties or confusion in incident to the breaking of contact.

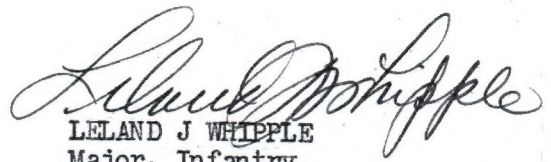
CC"R", with 19 AIB and 47 Tk Bn, moved to the vicinity of Dittwiller (for assembly area see journal). Although the move was made under extreme cold weather conditions and icy roads, all vehicles were brought to the rear without loss. The 2-315 Inf reverted to the 79th Div after withdrawal to the rear.

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Authority: NND-233017
By: FM
Date: 3/15/00

In connection with Division plans for employment, CC"R" remained in this area throughout the remaining part of the month were defense and security were stressed, and after some reequipping and rehabilitating, training schedules were set up and put into practice.

A word about Hatten. The mission to reestablish the Corps MLR was never accomplished, but it is to be kept in mind that our action there accomplished the most important feat: the prevention of an enemy breakthrough. Perhaps the greatest lesson derived from the Hatten action is that without prior reconnaissance, any attack has only a slim chance of success if the enemy is on the objective. In Hatten, the enemy was there, in strength, and possessed the necessary weapons and personnel to repel our attack. The Commander and staff of CC"R" believe that in counterattacking an enemy penetration with armor it must be done quickly and decisively with the greatest mass possible. If the enemy has been stopped and thereby has had time to organize his position, then our attacks should be in the same nature as attacking a defensive position, with great regard given to study of enemy anti-tank and dug-in infantry positions. As was evident there was no time allowed for this in Hatten.




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Dec. 31, 1944 - Jan. 2, 1945 in Dec. - Dec. 44 History
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C. note in Finding Ad. 11
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14th AD CCR ~~CCR~~ History - Jan. 3, 1945 - Jan. 1945